DARK HORSE COMICS®

STAR WARS
DARK EMPIRE II
1 OF 6

$2.95 US
$4.15 CAN

STAR WARS®

DARK EMPIRE II

Tom Veitch Cam Kennedy

STAR WARS®

DARK EMPIRE II

Tom Veitch..... Script
Cam Kennedy..... Art
Todd Klein..... Lettering
Dave Dorman..... Cover Art

Scott Tice
Book Design

Dan Thorsland & Ryder Windham
Editors

Special Thanks to
Lucy Autrey Wilson, Sue Rostoni,
& Allan Kausch

Mike Richardson publisher
Neil Hankerson executive vice president • David Scroggy v.p. of publishing
Lou Bank v.p. of sales & marketing • Andy Karabatsos v.p. of finance
Mark Anderson general counsel • Diana Schutz editor in chief
Randy Stradley creative director • Cindy Marks director of production & design
Mark Cox art director • Chris Creviston director of accounting
Michael Martens marketing director • Tod Borleske sales and licensing director
Mark Ellington director of operations • Dale LaFountain director of m.i.s.

Star Wars: Dark Empire II, #1 of 6, December 1994. Published monthly by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 10956 SE Main St., Milwaukie, Oregon 97222. Star Wars® is TM and © 1994 Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved. Used under authorization. All other material, unless otherwise specified, is © 1994 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Dark Horse Comics® and the Dark Horse logo are registered trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this publication and those of any pre-existing person or institution is intended and any similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, by any means, without the express written permission of Lucasfilm Ltd. and Dark Horse Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA.

Operation Shadow Hand

Luke Skywalker's bold attempt to learn the dark-side secrets of Emperor Palpatine nearly ended in disaster for Luke and for the Rebel Alliance.

But thanks to Luke's Jedi sister Leia Organa Solo, Han Solo, and other good friends, Luke was rescued and the Empire's terrible World Devastator weapons were destroyed.

In a final confrontation with the Emperor himself, Luke and Leia joined together as Jedi in the Force. Enveloped in light, the Emperor fell victim to his own cataclysmic dark-side energy!

Long before the cloned Emperor's demise, the evil ruler initiated an elite corps of seven warriors whom he empowered with the dark side of the Force. These "dark Jedi," as he called them, were authorized to put into action his master plan to retake the Galaxy: Operation Shadow Hand.

Following the disappearance of their Emperor, the Imperial elite, under the command of Darkside Executor Sedriss, initiated a series of assaults against the world in proximity to the Galactic Core.

Luke Skywalker, in the meantime, had found clues in the Jedi Holocron which made him believe that some Jedi Knights might have survived Darth Vader's program of extermination.

Near the Cron Drift, in the derelict space city Nespis VIII, Luke discovered the fallen Jedi Kam Solusar. With great difficulty, Luke managed to free Solusar from the dark side. In gratitude, Solusar agreed to join Luke in reviving the ancient company of Jedi Knights.

As Luke returns to Pinnacle Base, Darkside Executor Sedriss is going forward with Operation Shadow Hand. Sedriss and his men are preparing to deliver the Empire's discipline to a renegade manufacturing world at the fringes of the Galactic Core.

THE *AVENGER* HAS ACHIEVED HYPERSPACE TERMINUS, SIR. THE FLEET IS ASSEMBLED.

WE ARE READY TO *ANNIHILATE* THE PLANET ON YOUR COMMAND!

THE PLANET *BALMORRA* IS A SUBJUGATED FACTORY WORLD, PRIME BUILDER OF THE AGILE *AT-ST WALKER*. AFTER THE BATTLE OF ENDOR, THE BALMORRANS WERE LIBERATED BY THE REBEL ALLIANCE AND ENJOYED FREEDOM FOR *FIVE YEARS*.

BUT FOLLOWING THE UNEXPECTED RESURGENCE OF *EMPEROR PALPATINE*, THE GREAT WEAPONS FACTORIES OF BALMORRA WERE ONCE AGAIN PLACED UNDER *IMPERIAL EDICT*.

NOW THE EMPEROR IS RUMORED *DEAD* AGAIN. BALMORRA HAS TURNED OPENLY *REBELLIOUS*--THUS BECOMING A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR THE DISCIPLINE OF *OPERATION SHADOW HAND*.

BATTLE STATIONS! HOLD YOUR FIRE!

PREPARE TO LAUNCH TROOP CARRIERS AND ATTACK DROIDS!

I NEVER TRUSTED GOVERNOR BELTANE.

FOR YEARS HE HAS BOASTED THAT HIS *WAR MACHINES* WERE THE ONLY REASON FOR THE EMPIRE'S SUCCESS!

EXECUTOR SEDRISS! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS? HAS THE EMPIRE GONE MAD?

DON'T PLAY THE INNOCENT, BELTANE.

WE KNOW YOU'RE ARMING THE REBELS.

I'M HERE TO GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE FACE--

--SURRENDER ALL YOUR OPERATIONS AT ONCE AND BE EXECUTED.

OTHERWISE I WILL COME DOWN THERE AND DESTROY YOU.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR PROBLEM, SEDRISS... AREN'T OUR FACTORIES STILL SUPPLYING YOUR MOST ADVANCED ARMOR?

YOU CAN'T DESTROY US--YOU NEED US.

THEY DO HAVE LETH'S NEW WAR DROIDS IN PRODUCTION, SIR--THE SD-10s.

I KNOW, MORDI. I NEED THOSE DROIDS TO SMASH THE REBELS...THAT'S WHY I DON'T SIMPLY WIPE OUT BELTANE...AND HIS PLANET!

FORTUNATELY, THE EMPEROR HAS GIVEN US SOMETHING BALMORRA LACKS--THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE.

BELTANE--OUR TROOPS WILL LAND AT ONCE TO ACCEPT YOUR SURRENDER.

SURRENDER, SEDRISS--?

"--NOT A CHANCE! THIS WILL BE THE *BATTLE FOR FREEDOM* I'VE LONG AWAITED!"

GOVERNOR BELTANE IS HUNGRY FOR A FIGHT, AND *IMPERIAL MILITARY EXECUTOR SEDRISS* IS PLEASED TO OBLIGE HIM.

SEDRISS PUTS HIS TROOPS DOWN IN THE OPEN PLAINS AROUND BALMORRA'S CAPITOL, CERTAIN THAT GOVERNOR BELTANE WILL SEIZE THE INITIATIVE.

FIRE CONTROL, THIS IS *CAPTAIN VEERS*--

SD-9s AND *ATTACK-TROOPS* IN POSITION TO STORM THE CITY!

SEDRISS HAS TAKEN THE TRUE MEASURE OF HIS OPPONENT. NOT ONLY IS BELTANE HUNGRY TO THROW OFF THE *IMPERIAL YOKE*--

--AS THE CITY GATES OPEN, BELTANE *PROVES* HE HAS THE *WAR MACHINES* TO DO IT!

I DETECT 36,000 STORMTROOPERS, 700 AT-ST CLASS ASSAULT VEHICLES, AND 382 GD-9 WAR DROIDS, SIR!

SD-10s... TARGET ALL IMPERIAL WALKERS AND BATTLE DROIDS!

THE IMPERIAL OBJECTIVE IS TO *SEIZE* BALMORRA WITHOUT DESTROYING ANY OF ITS MANUFACTURING CAPABILITY.

TO DO THAT, SEDRISS MUST USE GROUND FORCES, PERHAPS SACRIFICING ***THOUSANDS OF STORMTROOPERS*** BEFORE THE BATTLE IS DECIDED!

BALMORRA UNLEASHES THE LATEST, MOST ADVANCED WAR DROIDS FROM ITS ASSEMBLY LINES--THE ***SD-10 S***...

...WHILE SEDRISS DEPLOYS LAST YEAR'S MODEL!

WE HAVE THE SD-9 S OUT-MATCHED, SIR... ALL THEIR ATTACK STRATEGIES ARE IN OUR MEMORY BANKS.

YEAH--AND GOVERNOR BELTANE MADE SURE YOU WERE ***PROGRAMMED*** WITH UNBEATABLE ***COUNTER-MOVES!***

BOTH DROIDS CAME OFF IMPERIAL DRAWING BOARDS. THE SD-10s ARE DESIGNED BY *UMAK LETH*, CREATOR OF THE FEARSOME *WORLD DEVASTATOR*.

BUT BELTANE HAS INCORPORATED THE NEWEST SELF-HEALING METALS, POINT-OF-IMPACT SHIELDS, AND FAST-REACTION SERVO-SYSTEMS.

DESPITE HIS SHREWDNESS, GOVERNOR BELTANE HAS FAILED TO RECKON WITH THE *FORESIGHT* OF THE EMPEROR AND HIS MILITARY EXECUTOR!

THE FOOL HAS THROWN *EVERYTHING* AT US. THE *TRAP* IS SPRUNG--!

PULL BACK THE TROOPS, MORDI.

GLADLY, SEDRISS.

BEFORE HIS RECENT DEMISE, THE EMPEROR BEGAN MANUFACTURING A POWERFUL *NEW ATTACK-FIGHTER* ON SECURE WORLDS DEEP IN THE *GALACTIC CORE*.

SHADOW DROIDS AWAY!

CALLED *SHADOW DROIDS*, ANOTHER OF UMAK LETH'S MURDEROUS WONDERS, THESE SPACE-FARING WAR MACHINES ARE BUILT AROUND THE *BRAINS* OF FALLEN *IMPERIAL FIGHTER ACES*.

IMMERSED IN *NUTRIENT BATHS* AT THE HEART OF THE GIANT MACHINES, HARDWIRED TO *TACTICS COMPUTERS*, THE SHADOWS' CYBORG CONTROLLERS EXCHANGE A BLIZZARD OF DIGITAL CODE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE *COMMAND SHIP*.

01001101001011100101
11001010100001101111
00110100110100110101
11011110010110111100 11

01001101001011101001
11101001100011100110
10100110100110100
11101011000110

UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANT AT TWELVE-ZERO...RETARGET ALL-- KZZZT-- BRZZZTT--*

IT IS ALSO RUMORED THE EMPEROR HAS GIVEN THE SHADOWS AN ADVANTAGE NO OPPONENT CAN MATCH--

--THE CYBERPILOT BRAINS ARE *EMPOWERED* BY THE DARK SIDE!

GOVERNOR! THE IMPS HAVE SOME NEW KIND OF *ASSAULT CRAFT*, SIR ... MAKIN' A *MESS* OF THE SDs.

THE EMPIRE IS *CHEATING*, SIR...IT IS BYPASSING ITS OWN *SUPPLY NETWORK!*

IT'S MOVED *TOP-SECRET* PROJECTS TO THE DEEP CORE!

YES... IF THE IMPERIALS HAD DONE ANYTHING *LESS*, THEY WOULDN'T BE *GALACTIC RULERS*, WOULD THEY?

...AND I HAVE TOP-SECRET PROJECTS OF *MY OWN!*

IT IS SAID THAT THE FIRST ART OF WAR IS *SECRECY.*

YOUR OPPONENT MUST NOT KNOW YOUR *TRUE CAPABILITIES*--UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE.

UNKNOWN TO THE EMPIRE, BALMORRA HAS BEEN DEVELOPING ITS OWN WEAPONS DESIGNS, MAKING ITS OWN ADVANCES IN THE ART OF WARFARE.

USING THEIR YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BUILDING WAR DROIDS, THE BALMORRANS HAVE BEEN WORKING ON A NASTY BEHEMOTH THEY CALL THE *X-1 VIPER AUTOMADON.*

ITS ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY INCLUDES A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE ART OF DEFENSE:

MOLECULAR SHIELDING THAT ABSORBS THE ENERGY OF AN ATTACKER'S BLASTS, AND CHANNELS IT DIRECTLY TO A WAR DROID'S OWN TURBOLASERS!

GOVERNOR BELTANE PLANS TO OFFER THIS NEW WAR DROID TO THE *REBEL ALLIANCE...*

10110100110001
00100011010111
11011100101010

THE VIPER HAS YET TO BE *BATTLE-TESTED.*

NOW'S AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY!

WHAT'S THIS? WHY WASN'T I TOLD?!

I *WANT* THOSE NEW WAR MACHINES FOR THE *EMPIRE!* GET BELTANE ON THE *COMM* SCREEN!

OBVIOUSLY, BELTANE HAS BROKEN HIS *TREATY* WITH THE EMPIRE, SIR!

HIS PLANET DESERVES TO *DIE!*

BUT SEDRISS ISN'T READY TO UNLEASH HIS *STAR DESTROYERS* AGAINST BALMORRA-- YET.

OKAY, BELTANE-- YOU'VE *PROVED* YOUR POINT.

WHAT DO YOU *WANT* FOR THOSE NEW DROIDS?

YOU CAN HAVE THEM *CHEAPLY*, SEDRISS--

BALMORRA WANTS *FREEDOM*, NO MORE, NO LESS.

ONCE WE ARE FREE, WE'LL *SELL* YOU ARMS ON A CONTRACT BASIS... IF WE *CHOOSE* TO.

ARE YOU *INSANE*? THE EMPEROR WON'T STAND FOR IT! HE DOESN'T BUY WEAPONS FROM *FREE* PLANETS!

FROM WHAT I HEAR, THE EMPEROR DOESN'T BUY WEAPONS FROM *ANYBODY*--

--HE'S *DEAD*.

YES, WELL...

YOUR POINT IS WELL TAKEN. I'LL SEND REPRESENTATIVES DOWN IN AN HOUR TO DRAW UP TERMS.

EXECUTOR SEDRISS, YOU ARE A MAN OF FINE PERCEPTION!

I DON'T UNDER-STAND, SIR! WHY DON'T WE *VAPORIZE* THEIR CITIES AND BE *DONE* WITH THEM?

I AGREE WITH VILL GOIR. THE *OTHER* WEAPONS WORLDS MAY GET SIMILAR IDEAS.

WAR IS MORE THAN A MATTER OF *VENGEANCE*, MORDI.

ONE OF THE SUBTLETIES OF THE MILITARY ART IS USING YOUR *ENEMY'S RE-SOURCES* TO DEFEAT HIM.

I *WANT* THOSE NEW DROIDS FOR THE EMPIRE AND I WANT THEM *NOW*. WE'LL AGREE TO *ANYTHING* BELTANE WANTS.

ONCE I TAKE POSSESSION OF THOSE WAR DROIDS -- AND THE MEN WHO DESIGNED THEM -- I WILL REDUCE *BALMORRA* TO *SPACE DUST!*

FRANKLY, I DON'T INTEND TO WASTE ANY MORE TIME WITH LITTLE FISH LIKE *BELTANE*--

"-- I HAVE A MORE IMPORTANT *ADVERSARY* TO DEAL WITH BEFORE THE EMPEROR'S RETURN."

LUKE? IS THAT YOU?

YEAH-- I'M BACK!--

--AND I'VE BROUGHT A *FRIEND!*

READY TO TAKE HER IN, KAM?

I'M WITH YOU, LUKE!

THE *JEDI KNIGHTS* WILL RISE AGAIN!

PINNACLE BASE, THE FIFTH MOON OF DA SOOCHA.

LUKE HAS BEEN AWAY FOR MANY WEEKS. FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF THE *JEDI HOLOCRON*, HE VISITED THE OLD *NESPIS VIII SPACE CITY*.

THERE HE HAD A *MOMENTOUS* ENCOUNTER WITH THE *VERY MAN* WHO NOW RETURNS WITH HIM TO THE REBEL COMMAND POST.

WHNNH.

LEIA...THIS IS *KAM SOLUSAR*... A JEDI KNIGHT.

A... *JEDI*--?

YES. I WAS APPRENTICED TO THE GREAT JEDI MASTER, *RANIK SOLUSAR*--MY FATHER.

NOW I HAVE BEGUN MY SERVICE UNDER *LUKE SKYWALKER*.

LEIA FEELS THE STRENGTH OF THE *FORCE* IN KAM SOLUSAR'S HEART. WONDER OF WONDERS... SHE AND LUKE ARE NO LONGER *ALONE!*

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME, LUKE... THERE'S A *BIG MEETING* GOING ON.

THINGS ARE REALLY STARTING TO *POP*--

MON MOTHMA, LEADER OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE, IS ELATED TO LEARN THAT ANOTHER JEDI HAS AT LAST BEEN FOUND!

A JEDI--THIS IS A *VERY* GREAT DAY FOR THE ALLIANCE.

TAKE A SEAT, MY FRIENDS. *GENERAL CALRISSIAN* IS TELLING US EXCITING NEWS.

OKAY--I'LL BACKTRACK FOR THE LATE ARRIVALS...

GOVERNOR *BELTANE* OF *BALMORRA*, AN INDUSTRIAL PLANET IMPORTANT TO THE EMPIRE, HAS *DEFEATED* THE EMPIRE'S FORCES IN OPEN BATTLE...

BELTANE'S A *PRACTICAL* MAN...HE'S STILL DEALING WITH THE EMPIRE...

...BUT HE KNOWS THE *SURVIVAL* OF HIS PEOPLE DEPENDS ON THE RAPID RESTORATION OF THE *REPUBLIC*...

HE HAS OFFERED US A COUP--A CARGO OF THESE NEW *S-1 VIPER AUTOMADON* WAR DROIDS HE'S JUST SOLD TO THE IMPS.

AS THE HOLOGRAM OF THE ADVANCED WAR MACHINE REVOLVES OVER THE ASSEMBLY, LANDO EXPLAINS THAT BELTANE HAS ARRANGED TO LET THE REBELS *INTERCEPT* THE SHIPMENT EN ROUTE TO *BYSS*.

BELTANE HAS GIVEN US THE ITINERARY AND *ALL* THE SHIP REGISTRY NUMBERS.

HE'S TAKING A VERY GREAT RISK. IF THE *EMPIRE* EVER FINDS OUT, HIS PLANET IS *DOOMED*.

WE KNOW *EXACTLY* WHERE WE ARE GOING TO INTERCEPT THE SHIPMENT... ONCE WE HAVE THOSE *DROIDS*, WE'LL TARGET THE *SIX* TOP IMPERIAL COMMAND POSTS.

I'VE GOT A *BETTER* IDEA--

--LET THE SHIPMENT *GO THROUGH* TO BYSS-- BUT WE'LL PACK 'EM WITH A CARGO OF *REBEL TROOPS*.

WHEN WE REACH BYSS, WE WHEEL OUT THE NEW DROIDS AND MAKE A DASH FOR THE *CITADEL*.

THAT'S A DARING PLAN, GENERAL ANTILLES. I *LIKE* IT!

A QUICK THRUST TO THE CITADEL AND THE WAR IS *OVER!*

I DISAGREE.

THIS *IS* THE MOMENT TO PRESS OUR ADVANTAGE. BUT I'VE *BEEN* ON BYSS. I *KNOW* THEIR SECURITY. YOU'LL NEVER REACH THE CITADEL.

I SUGGEST THESE WAR DROIDS BE USED TO LIBERATE *OTHER* WORLDS THAT CAN HELP THE ALLIANCE LAUNCH AN *ALL-OUT ATTACK*.

DESPITE THE RESPECT LUKE'S WORDS COMMAND, FEELING IS RUNNING HIGH FOR WEDGE'S PLAN.

AREN'T YOU FORGETTING, LUKE--*I* FLEW THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON* RIGHT INTO THE CITADEL!

YEAH-- SECURITY ON BYSS IS LIKE A *SIEVE!*

OF COURSE THESE *WAR DROIDS* CAN'T BE AS AGILE AND QUICK AS THE *FALCON*, BUT STILL--

DON'T FORGET--WE'LL HAVE *SURPRISE* ON OUR SIDE, IN AN ODDS-DOWN SITUATION THAT COUNTS FOR A *LOT!*

I AGREE WITH *WEDGE*. MY RECOMMENDATION TO THE ALLIANCE WOULD BE TO *STRIKE NOW*, AT THE CENTER OF *IMPERIAL CONTROL!*

THAT WOULD BE *MY* OPINION ALSO, GENERAL CALRISSIAN.

WITH THE *EMPEROR* OUT OF THE WAY, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THE *IMPERIAL BIG SHOTS* ARE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS!

THEIR RESPONSE TO A *DIRECT ATTACK* WILL BE SLUGGISH AT BEST!

SUDDENLY, IT SEEMS LIKE THE WHOLE ALLIANCE HAS TURNED AGAINST LUKE...

LUKE, WE CERTAINLY RESPECT YOUR CONCERNS...

DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO TO REESTABLISH THE JEDI...

...AND WE WILL DO WHAT *WE* HAVE TO DO, TO FULFILL OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE *ALLIANCE*.

BUT WE *CAN'T* AFFORD TO WAIT-- WE *MUST* STRIKE NOW... AT THE *HEART* OF THE EMPIRE.

AS THE STRATEGY MEETING BREAKS UP, MON MOTHMA ISSUES A *STRICT ADMONITION* OF TOTAL SECRECY. IT IS BELIEVED THAT *IMPERIAL SPIES* HAVE INFILTRATED THE LOWER ECHELONS OF THE ALLIANCE!

LUKE, LEIA, AND KAM SOLUSAR WITHDRAW TO LEIA'S CHAMBERS TO DISCUSS JEDI MATTERS.

LUKE, I HOPE THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE A *CONFLICT* BETWEEN YOU AND THE ALLIANCE.

I DON'T SEE A PROBLEM. THE ALLIANCE OBVIOUSLY HAS TO BE THINKING IN TERMS OF IMMEDIATE GAINS.

WE JEDI WILL DO WHAT WE MUST.

I'M WITH LUKE... I DON'T THINK MON MOTHMA *KNOWS* WHAT SHE'S GETTING INTO.

THE EMPEROR HAS A NEW *ELITE CORPS* OF DARK-SIDE WARRIORS... THEY'RE *VERY* POWERFUL.

I KNOW... I WAS *ONE* OF THEM.

THE HOLOCRON SUGGESTED THAT IMPORTANT *JEDI ARTIFACTS* MAY SURVIVE ON *OSSUS*... A PLANET WHICH USED TO BE A CENTER OF *JEDI TEACHING*.

KAM AND I ARE PLANNING AN EXPEDITION.

I SPENT MANY HOURS WITH THE HOLOCRON WHILE YOU WERE GONE, LUKE.

THE HOLOCRON TOLD ME THAT *VIMA-DA-BODA* CAN HELP US...

I NEED TO *FIND* HER, BEFORE SHE DIES.

YOU NEED TO GO INTO *HIDING*, LEIA... UNTIL YOUR *CHILD* IS BORN.

HE WILL BE A VERY GREAT JEDI.

LEIA IS *SIX MONTHS PREGNANT* WITH HER THIRD CHILD... AND LUKE KNOWS THAT *ALL* LEIA'S CHILDREN WILL PLAY A PART IN THE RETURN OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS.

YOU'RE RIGHT, LUKE... BUT *FIRST* I WILL FIND VIMA.

THEN HAN AND I PLAN TO SPEND TIME IN SECLUSION WITH OUR CHILDREN, AS YOU SUGGEST.

WE'VE ONLY SEEN THE TWINS A FEW TIMES A YEAR SINCE THEY WERE BORN!

HMM... SO *THIS* IS THE FAMOUS *HOLOCRON!* NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT.

AS *KAM SOLUSAR* HOLDS THE GLOWING HOLOCRON, THE ANCIENT RECORDING DEVICE DETECTS THE PRESENCE OF A JEDI KNIGHT...

GREETINGS, JEDI!

I AM *BODO BAAS*, GATEKEEPER OF THE HOLOCRON.

DO YOU HAVE A *QUESTION* FOR ME?

EH?

TAKEN ABACK AT THE SIGHT OF THE ANCIENT JEDI MASTER, SOLUSAR FUMBLES FOR SOMETHING TO SAY.

UH... M-M-MASTER BAAS...

UH... WE WOULD BE... GRATEFUL FOR ANY ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE THREE JEDI KNIGHTS ...UH... IN THIS TIME OF STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DARKNESS.

CERTAINLY.

THE HOLOCRON IS OVERFLOWING WITH ADVICE! LISTEN AND LOOK--

--MANY GREAT BATTLES YET TO COME... MANY TRIALS AND TESTS... YES, AND MANY JEDI KNIGHTS MAY SOMEDAY BE...

...BUT ABOVE ALL, PATIENCE IS NEEDED... ONE STEP AT A TIME... FIRST TO OSSUS... TO THE SOURCES...

...THINGS THAT WERE LOST CAN NOW BE FOUND... SOMEONE WHO WAS DEAD MAY YET LIVE... ALTHOUGH MEN CAN FORGET ITS NAME, THE FORCE CAN NEVER DIE...

AS THE THREE JEDI BEHOLD THE HOLOCRON'S IMAGES OF ANCIENT OSSUS, THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON* IS BEING PREPPED FOR A RETURN TO THE SMUGGLER'S MOON *NAR SHADDAA!*

NO, ARTOO... THEY AREN'T TAKING US WITH THEM. FRANKLY, I'M *RELIEVED*, AND YOU SHOULD BE TOO.

NOW YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET THAT *COMPLETE OVER-HAUL* YOU KEEP PUTTING OFF!

WHRR BIP BREET?

BRT VIP TWOOT BDEET DOOPADIT PAZEET PDRT!

YES. I KNOW A *DROID* ISN'T SUPPOSED TO *REST* LIKE A HUMAN...

...BUT SOMETIMES I WONDER ABOUT HUMANS--THE ONES I KNOW *NEVER* SEEM TO SLOW DOWN!

HAN'S OLD FRIENDS *SALLA ZEND* AND *SHUG NINX* ARE ANXIOUS TO GET BACK TO THE SPACEPORT MOON... AND TO FIXING SHIPS AND HAULING CARGO!

FIRST THING WE GET BACK I'M FINDIN' A SHIP THAT'S MAKIN' THE *BYSS RUN.*

I NEED THE *STARLIGHT INTRUDER.*

ME, I'M ITCHIN' TO GET MY HANDS ON MY FAVORITE *HYDROSPANNER* AND START TEARIN' DOWN A LIGHT-DRIVE--

-- I'M TOO *OLD* FOR ALL THIS FIGHTIN'.

SALLA... SHUG... YOU GUYS ABOUT *READY?*

LEIA'S ON HER WAY. SHE'S GOT HER HEART SET ON FINDING THAT OLD JEDI WOMAN, VIMA-DA-BODA ...

HOPE VIMA'S STILL ALIVE! C'MON, LET'S LOCK EVERY-THING DOWN.

WE'RE READY, HAN... BUT THE WOOKIEE DE-CIDED THIS IS THE TIME TO RIP OUT THE REPULSOR-COMPENSATOR.

I TOLD HIM TO FORGET IT-- THE FALCON'S BEEN FLYIN' WITH A BROKEN COMPENSATOR FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER!

SURE HAS... BUT I MADE THE MISTAKE OF TELLIN' CHEWIE THE REBEL WAREHOUSE HAD SIXTY SPARES GATHERIN' DUST.

C'MON, CHEWIE... THAT'S GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL WE REACH NEW ALDERAAN.

GRRWRRANN!

HERE COMES LEIA.

AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT BOUNTY HUNTERS ON NAR SHADDAA?

THEY'LL BE LAYING FOR BOTH OF YOU!

SHUG WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT BOUNTY HUNTERS ON NAR SHADDAA.

WHO'S HE KIDDING? HAVE I STOPPED TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING IN THE LAST TEN YEARS?

LET'S GET MOVING!

YOUR SISTER IS A STRONG JEDI, LUKE.

SHE WAS RAISED TO BE A *LEADER*... SHE'LL PROBABLY BE ASKED TO TAKE MON MOTHMA'S PLACE SOMEDAY.

LEIA HAS NOT ADMITTED IT TO ANYONE, BUT IN FACT, HER HEART IS TORN BETWEEN FAITHFULNESS TO THE CAUSE OF THE REBELLION... AND THE PROTECTIVE INSTINCTS OF MOTHERHOOD.

AS ALWAYS WITH LEIA, THE *CAUSE OF THE REBELLION* GAINS THE UPPER HAND!

SO HAN AND LEIA AND CHEWBACCA ARE OFF TO NAR SHADDAA... *WHEN* DO YOU 'N' ME LEAVE FOR *OSSUS*?

TOMORROW. FIRST WE NEED TO *TALK*.

I WANT YOU TO TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT THIS "*SEDRISS*" CHARACTER.

BYSS.

AS REBELS AND JEDI PUT THEIR PLANS INTO ACTION, *IMPERIAL EXECUTOR SEDRISS* HAS NOT BEEN IDLE.

I-7 HOWLRUNNERS, YOU ARE CLEAR TO DOCK IN THE CITADEL.

IT IS KNOWN AMONG THE IMPERIAL LEADERSHIP THAT A NUMBER OF *HIDDEN CLONE TANKS* SURVIVED SKYWALKER'S ASSAULT.

BUT CERTAIN *POWERFUL ADEPTS*, MEMBERS OF THE EMPEROR'S INNER CIRCLE, ARE SPREADING RUMORS THAT THE EMPEROR WILL *NOT* TAKE A NEW CLONE BODY.

THESE SAME ADEPTS ARE THREATENING TO HAVE SEDRISS *EXECUTED* FOR HIS FAILURE IN THE BATTLE OF BALMORRA.

SEDRISS RETURNS TO BYSS--TO MAKE SURE THAT *NEVER* HAPPENS--

--AND TO SECURE HIS *RIGHTS* AS DARK-SIDE EXECUTOR AND MILITARY DICTATOR OF ALL IMPERIAL FORCES.

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, IN THE EMPEROR'S CLONE LABS, NEFTA AND SA-DI, TWO OF THE EMPEROR'S CLOSEST FRIENDS, ARE HARD AT WORK...

...PROVIDING A FINAL SOLUTION FOR ALL THE YOUNG CLONES THAT LUKE SKYWALKER FAILED TO DESTROY!

I FIND THIS WORK MOST DISTASTEFUL, SA-DI!

I AGREE! SKYWALKER SHOULD HAVE FINISHED THE JOB!

THE UNFAITHFUL ADEPTS ARE MAKING SURE THE RUMORS OF THE EMPEROR'S PERMANENT DEMISE COME TRUE!

ONE LESS FUTURE EMPEROR... ONE DEATH CLOSER TO POWER OVER THE GALAXY!

THERE...THAT'S THE LAST ONE. IT IS FINISHED.

PALPATINE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN...WE CAN'T WAIT INDEFINITELY.

THE THRONE CANNOT SIT EMPTY OR THE EMPIRE WILL COLLAPSE!

NEFTA...SA-DI... WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

SEDRISS...YOU DARE TO SHOW YOUR FACE IN THE CITADEL, AFTER YOUR SHAMEFUL DEFEAT ON BALMORRA?

IT IS YOU WHO HAVE SPREAD THE RUMOR THAT THE EMPEROR IS GONE FOR GOOD--

--AND NOW YOU HOPE TO MAKE CERTAIN OF IT.

MY INTUITION WAS RIGHT-- NONE OF YOU ARE TO BE TRUSTED.

WE HAD TO DO IT, SEDRISS...PALPATINE IS TRAPPED IN THE NETHER-WORLD--HE COULD BE THERE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS!

SOMEONE HAS TO RULE THE EMPIRE, SEDRISS--!

YES, THAT'S TRUE... ONE POWERFUL INDIVIDUAL MUST RULE--

--BUT CERTAINLY THAT WON'T BE YOU!

ZZRRRNNNN!

THE ADEPT NEFTA HAS BEEN USING A *LIGHTSABER* TO SMASH THE CLONE TANKS--HE IGNITES IT NOW...TO DEFEND HIS *LIFE!*

UHNNG!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, NEFTA--IS YOUR *MAGIC* OF NO USE TO YOU AGAINST A *DARK-SIDE WARRIOR?*

AND YOU, *SA-DI*... THEY TELL ME YOU'RE CALLING FOR MY *EXECUTION* FOR SIGNING A TREATY WITH BALMORRA!

"THAT'S NOT TRUE, SEDRISS. I HAVE NOTHING BUT *RESPECT* FOR YOUR DECISIONS!

GOOD--THEN YOU'LL APPROVE MY DECISION TO *EXECUTE YOU!*

AS SEDRISS CLEAVES THE ADEPT IN HALF WITH HIS LIGHTSABER, A *FAMILIAR FIGURE* WATCHES FROM A DOORWAY--

SHHEEURRKMM!

EXCELLENT, MY FRIEND.

--REBORN ONCE MORE!

I SEE AT LEAST ONE OF MY CHARGEMEN HAS BEEN FAITHFUL DURING MY ABSENCE.

MY MASTER!

I HAVE STOOD FAST UPON THE DAY OF YOUR RETURN, EMPEROR. THESE ARE THE *LAST* OF THE TRAITORS.

GOOD. NOW WE MUST PROCEED WITH OUR *PLAN*.

THE REBELS ARE OVERCONFIDENT. WE WILL MOVE *QUICKLY* TO FINISH THEM.

BRING ME THE *WOMAN JEDI* BEFORE SHE HAS HER *THIRD CHILD*... AND SET ALL YOUR FORCES AGAINST *LUKE SKYWALKER!*

AS FOR THE ARMIES OF THE *ALLIANCE*, I HAVE *MORE* THAN A FEW SURPRISES IN STORE FOR *THEM!*

SON OF ULTRON